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Rishabh Pant

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PANT CHECKS IN, SHAMI IGNORED FOR TESTS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

Rishabh Pant made comeback into India's Test squad for two-match series against SA. However, Mohammed Shami has been ignored once again

DELHI KEEPER-BATTER PASSES FITNESS TEST

India's wicketkeeper batter Pant was an automatic choice after recovering from a foot fracture sustained during the fourth Test against England in Manchester in July. He missed the West Indies series but led India A team against South Africa A. Shami, who has had a creditable Ranji campaign as of now, has been overlooked again

AKASH DEEP IN, PRASIDH KRISHNA OUT

- Pacer Akash Deep Singh recovered from shoulder injury and has been picked but Prasidh Krishna's name has been dropped
- India's pace attack features Jasprit Bumrah and Mohd Siraj while the spin will be led by veteran Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav and all-rounder Washington Sundar. Shubman Gill is captain | P17

Two

INDIA WILL PLAY TWO TESTS AGAINST SA IN KOLKATA, GUWAHATI

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

ALL SET

Security personnel carrying election materials ahead of the first phase of Bihar polls, in Muzaffarpur on Wednesday | PTI

STILLNESS OF THE DISCERNING IN BIHAR

BIHAR has never been short of noise. Certainly not when it mattered. Its politics has marched through history with a daring swagger — JP's call that shook New Delhi, Mandal's churn that redrafted power, the long years of Lalu raj that jolted the old order. Even the subtler Nitish era made bold strokes on the canvas, turning India's polity yet again with the caste census narrative and grand alliance politics.

Yet this election arrives on soft feet. On November 5, the campaign for the first stretch of 121 constituencies is winding down, and the battle for the remaining 122 — those border districts where sentiment often travels across rivers and frontiers — will begin soon. And through it all, there hangs a curious quiet.

Whether in Nitish Kumar's native Bakhtiyarpur, or hamlets like Gauspur and Chitapur fringing Patna, whether in Dalit 'tolas' where caste is still geo-tagged or along the mobile 100-km sweep to Gaya on NH-22, out in villages like Barachati and Tekari near where a legend named Dashrath Manjhi once moved mountains, the stillness is audible. Even in places like Mokama where bullets flew the other day, or Barh, which saw fisticuffs after this writer left, the action is all on one slim band where politics does its business. The people seem unmoved. Almost cold.

SANTWANA BHATTACHARYA
EDITOR

This is not indifference. It is an extended pause — a thinking state, perhaps it's the hush of crores of people thinking harder.

The old Bihar election grammar is still here: the woven caste alliances, the search for the right symbol atop the right community, the deft stitching of booth workers and social equations. But listen closely, and the dialogues are shifting pitch. It is no longer enough to promise representation; people want opportunity. Bihar's young — impatient, painfully aware of the ticket-to-life stamped "migration" that's been their lot for years, and now uniformly literate about the ways of the world beyond their panchayat WhatsApp group — are asking sharper questions.

Identity of the other sort has not dissolved; only its fabric has thinned in the face of this new common identity, an identity of experience. Numbers are never incidental here. OBCs and EBCs together form roughly two-thirds of Bihar — a demographic truth that still underwrites strategy. Yadavs remain the single biggest OBC bloc, Kurmis and Kushwahas count in pockets where one village's mood can bend a seat, Dalits and Mahadalits together hold a weight politicians can never ignore, and the elite castes — though numerically modest — continue to influence candidate choice and the political discourse, particularly in the plains. CONTINUED ON: P12

Americans of Indian origin make major political gains

Mamdani first Indian-American and Muslim to be elected New York mayor

Ghazala Hashmi

Aftab Pureval

INDIAN ROOTS

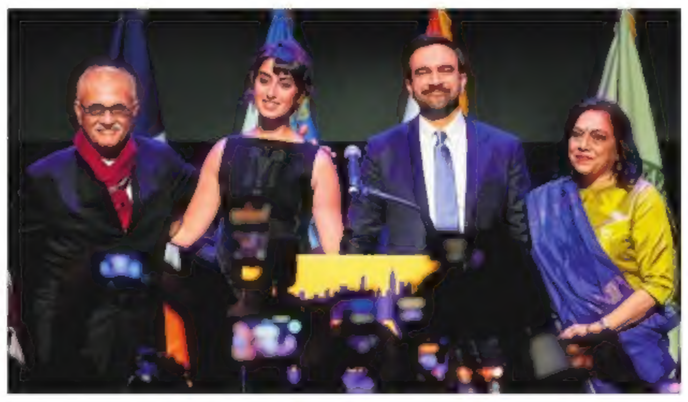
Ghazala Hashmi, L-G-elect Virginia was born in Hyderabad. Aftab Pureval is the son of a Punjabi father and a Tibetan mother

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

IN an extraordinary moment for diversity in American politics, three Indian-origin Americans carved history across key states signalling a possible new era in the United States.

Zohran Mamdani became the first Indian-American and Muslim to be elected Mayor of New York City, Ghazala Hashmi was chosen as Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, and Aftab Pureval secured a second term as Mayor of Cincinnati. Together, their victories mark a milestone in the growing political influence of South Asian Americans.

At just 34, Zohran Kwame Mamdani's stunning win has made him New York City's youngest mayor in over a 100 years and the first of Indian heritage to hold the post. Running as a Democratic Socialist, Mamdani triumphed over two formidable opponents, former governor Andrew Cuomo, contesting as an independent with the backing of President Donald Trump, and Republican Curtis Sliwa. With 83% of votes counted, Mamdani secured 948,202 votes (50.6%), while Cuomo managed 776,547 (41.3%). The city saw a record turnout of nearly two million votes, the highest since 1969.



Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani (2nd from right), with wife Rama Duwaji (2nd from left), father Mahmood Mamdani and mother Mira Nair in New York on Tuesday | AP

Born in Kampala, Uganda, Mamdani moved to New York at the age of seven. His mother, acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair, and father, Columbia University scholar Mahmood Mamdani, have long been symbols of cultural and intellectual achievement.

In his victory speech, Mamdani called his win a "mandate for change," thanking his parents and wife, Syrian-American artist Rama Duwaji.

His campaign, which resonated with young and working-class voters, centered on reducing living costs, expanding housing, and improving public transport—a continuation of his progressive record as a Queens assemblyman, where he introduced a pilot programme for free city buses. CONTINUED ON: P14

BJP 'stole' Haryana poll with 25 lakh fake votes, Bihar next target: Rahul

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

LEADER of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Election Commission of India of colluding with the BJP to 'steal' the 2024 Haryana elections in the saffron party's favour and claimed the same sinister plan will be used in Bihar to ensure the BJP's victory.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here on Wednesday, the Congress leader alleged that 25 lakh votes were 'stolen' in Haryana through 5.21 lakh duplicate votes, 93,174 invalid addresses, and 19.26 lakh bulk voters. Haryana has a total of two crore voters.

"I am confident that after the Bihar poll, we will make a presentation that the same thing happened in Bihar," he said, adding political parties are unable to check the 'vote theft' as they are provided with the voter list at the last moment.

"We have crystal-clear proof that 25 lakh voters in Haryana are fake, that they either don't exist, are duplicates, or were designed in a way that allows anybody to vote. One in eight voters in Haryana is fake, that's 12.5%," he said.

SIR: Integrity of poll main issue

On INDIA bloc's strategy to protest against SIR, Rahul said the "integrity of the election" is the fundamental issue

To substantiate his claim, he cited the example of a woman who appeared 223 times on the voter list. He also showed the photo of another woman, which he claimed was a Brazilian, saying it appeared 22 times under different names in 10 booths.

"This is proof of a centralised operation. What is a Brazilian person doing on the voters' list in Haryana?" he asked.

Responding to the allegations, Election Commission officials said the vote manipulation charge is unfounded as no appeals were filed against Haryana electoral rolls, nor was any multiple voting flagged when it allegedly happened.

NATIONAL PRIDE

PM Modi meets the victorious Indian team that won the ICC Women's World Cup, in New Delhi on Wednesday | PTI

Govt depts to get funds only after uploading project details to portal

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

WITH various government departments failing to upload details regarding tenders awarded and works being implemented to the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP), Finance Secretary (Budget and Allocation) PC Jaffer has said that funds will be released only if uploading is completed.

Of the 36,706 tendered works, details of only 505 have been uploaded. In 2023, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched the portal and introduced a contract management module to track projects worth Rs 50 lakh and above being implemented across the state.

This was introduced in the Public Works, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and Water Resources departments, and in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on a pilot basis.

In July 2024, a notification was issued by the Finance Department to upload details right from inviting tenders to clearance of bills. In the previous system, there was no mechanism to monitor work on the projects.

Sources said officials had to spend a lot of time checking papers related to various projects and bills for the works implemented. Later, the bills and papers related to development projects had to be submitted to the auditor general. "We have made it online. One need not carry papers now. It will help officials to know the financial status and physical progress of the project under implementation," the sources said. P4

Our intention is not to delay, but bring in transparency. Contractors are not against this, but they are seeking time

Official

EXPRESS READ

Nandini ghee price up by ₹90/kg

Bengaluru: Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) has announced a steep hike in the price of Nandini ghee by Rs 90 per kilo, and butter rates by Rs 26 per kilo. Nandini ghee, which was sold at Rs 610 per kilo, will now cost Rs 700, and butter sold at Rs 544 would now cost Rs 570. The rates came into effect on Wednesday. Meanwhile, speculation is rife that Nandini milk rates would also go up | P5

SSLC, II PU timetable announced

Bengaluru: The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) released the timetable for the first round of final examinations for SSLC and second PU courses. The SSLC exams will start from March 18, 2026, and continue till April 2, and will be held from 10 am to 1.15 pm. Similarly, the II PU exams will begin from April 25, 2026, and end on May 5 | TIMETABLE: P2

Study traces Koraga tribe ancestry to Indus Valley era

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mangaluru

A groundbreaking genomic study led by researchers from Mangalore University and Yenepoya (Deemed-to-be University) has identified a distinct ancestral source in the Koraga tribe that may date back to the Indus Valley Civilisation. The findings, published in the European Journal of Human Genetics (EJHG), propose the existence of a fourth ancestral component-the 'Proto-Dravidian' ancestry-thereby refining the current understanding of the genetic structure of the Indian subcontinent.

Until now, genetic models of Indian ancestry have generally recognised three major ancestral sources: Iranian plateau farmer-related, Pontic-Caspian steppe pastoralist-related, and Andamanese hunter-gatherer-related.

However, the new study led by Dr M S Mustak and Dr Ranajit Das suggests this framework may be oversimplified. Their analysis reveals evidence for a fourth genetic stream that appears to have diverged around 4,400 years ago in the region between the Iranian plateau and the Indus Valley, coinciding with the time-depth of the Indus Valley Civilisation. The study proposes that this Proto-Dravidian ancestry represents a unique lineage distinct from previously recognised sources.

According to the authors, this genetic component forms a bridge between ancient Middle Eastern populations and early inhabitants of South Asia, supporting the hypothesis of a Dravidian heartland that predated the arrival of Indo-European languages. The research team, which includes noted linguist Prof George Van Driem of the University of Bern, demonstrates a correlation between linguistic and genetic lineages within Dravidian-speaking communities. P7

Genetic variants

The analysis identified multiple genetic variants linked to Loeys-Dietz Syndrome and other disorders